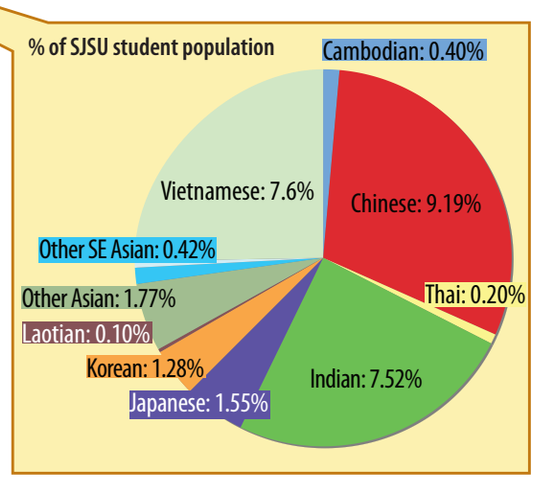
Special Issue

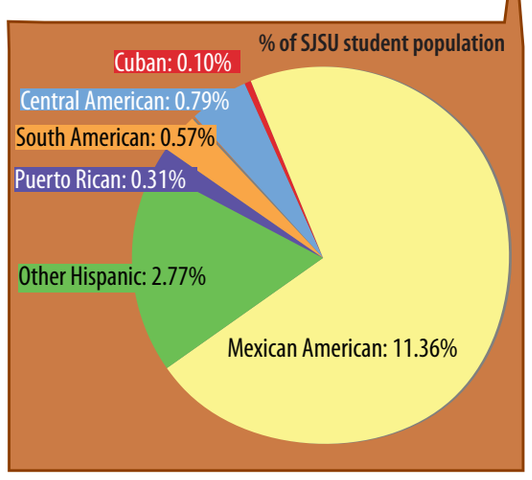
Asian: 9,268 **White: 8,725** **Hispanic: 4,908** Decline to State: 3,889 Filipino: 2,145 African American 1,496 American Indian Pacific Islander 266 Other 114 27

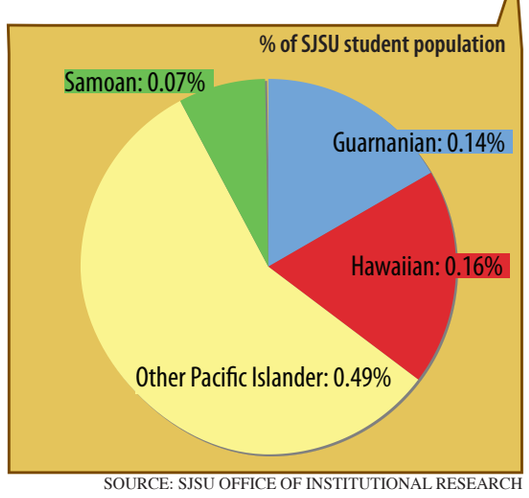
30,838 students: 100 percent SJSU

"We can make the most of this amazing diversity."

SJSU PRESIDENT DON KASSING
At his 2006 Welcome Address to the SJSU community







SOURCE: SJSU OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

VOLUME 130
ISSUE 52
thespartandaily.com

SPARTAN DAILY

70°/50° PARTLY CLOUDY

FREE — MONDAY, MAY 5, 2008 — SINCE 1934

The sum of its parts

When it's mostly a minority

By DAVID ZUGNONI AND COLLEEN WATSON
Opinion Editor & Staff Writer

For at least the last 10 years, no racial group has claimed the ethnic majority of students enrolled at San Jose State University, according to a Spartan Daily analysis of enrollment data provided by the Office of Institutional Research.

And every semester since Fall 1999, the Asian student population has surpassed the white population.

This semester, Asians make up 30 percent of the campus population, followed by whites at 28.3, Hispanics at 15.9 and blacks at 4.9.

"Most of the people come from different places," said Jerry Yu, a junior electrical engineering major. "It's nice to see different faces here. Imagine if the campus was just one group of people. I would not have moved here."

Kanan Gujarathi, a graduate computer engineering major, said, "You can find many people here from all over. It's a mixed culture, and you don't feel inferior here."

While most ethnicities are scattered throughout the different colleges, both the College of Business and the College of Engineering have a larger proportion of Asian students compared to their 30 percent representation on campus.

Forty-one percent of the College of Business is made up of Asian students, while 55 percent of engineering majors are Asian.

More than 30 percent of engineering majors are Indian, while they only make up 8 percent of the total

See **DEMO**, *page 6*

PHOTO ILUSTRATION BY LINDSAY BRYANT / SPARTAN DAILY

Checking off more than one box

Department of Education to update race data in 2010

By ELISHA MALDONADO
Staff Writer

The sidewalks are littered with them — so many faces.

You might be able to pick them out — by the colors of their skins, the colors of their hair, the colors of their eyes — and, judging by appearance, place them into one ethnic group or another.

But then there is Lina Jenssen, 24, an exchange student from Germany. Her father is German, but her mother is Filipino.

Jenssen said she used to feel more connected to her German culture since her life was there, but then she studied last semester in the Philippines, her mother's home country, and developed a strong fondness for that heritage, too. Where does she fit in? What does she claim?

"I don't know, I am divided," she said.

Now, the U.S. Department of Education is changing the way it collects and reports racial and ethnic data — which means that most multi-racial students, like Jenssen, will be able to check more than one box on the list.

Beginning in the 2010-11 school year, non-Hispanic students in the U.S. will have the ability to check all races that apply — something the current system doesn't

See **FORM**, *page 2*

CARLOS MORENO / SPARTAN DAILY

Lina Jenssen, who is German and Fillipino and lives at the International House, is a mass commucations major.

They have more than one way with words

By CHRIS BAUSINGER
Staff Writer

Tadashi Miyagi defines himself as a Japanese man who came to the U.S. to improve his English and obtain a degree university degree.

A 22-year-old senior environmental studies major, Miyagi speaks fluent Japanese and prides himself on having a good understanding of the English language.

"Everyone (in Japan) has to take English classes," Miyagi said. "Most of them are grammar skills, like reading skills, but not very many speaking or listening or conversation skills — vocabulary, you know, starting with 'apple.'"

Much like the old adage that says, "We fear that which we do not know," for students who are bilingual, speaking their native language in a foreign land can make people around them uneasy. Whether born outside the United States or to immigrant parents, these students face the challenge of learning English and retaining their parents' native tongues.

Mitchell Balajadia, a 23-year-old senior industrial science major, said he speaks the national language of the Philippines.

"I speak Tagalog mostly when I speak with family," he said.

More typical is the story of I-Ting Liu, who was born in Taiwan after her parents fled China to escape the communist regime, coming to America shortly after her birth. She took English as a Second Language during elementary school.

"When I was a kid, I did ESL," Liu said. "I thought it was, you know, for a few minutes every day. Somebody pulls you out and you go into this office, and you read and play games. That was the best part of my day."

She said she thought she was doing something different from what the other kids were doing.

"I remember being in that room and reading the letters 'E-S-L.' I was like, 'Oh, OK, that is probably what I am doing.' I had no idea that not all the other kids did it."

She also said that when she was young, kids knew she was different but didn't take that into consideration when

See **LANG**, *page 2*

It doesn't really matter what we are – sometimes

By KEVIN RAND
Executive Editor

"White boy. White boy."

I was in sixth grade. This was Laurelwood Elementary School in Salinas.

I had these friends — Barry, Clarence and Richard.

We had a bigger circle of friends outside of us, but we were all Filipino, and Filipinos often stuck together.

We knew something about each other because of our ethnicity. We knew the accents our relatives carried. We knew about break dancing and Pumas and Nike Airs. We knew to take them off when we went inside each others' houses.

We were Flips — Pinoy — we were brown and proud.

We listened to hip-hop. We ate rice. We watched black movies, like "Juice," "Boyz n the Hood," "Menace II Society" and "New Jack City." That's how we were, Filipinos from Salinas.

I always carried something with me though, and it showed. My eyes were rounder. My nose was bigger. I didn't eat rice with every meal, even though I said I did, because I wanted to be just as Filipino as they were.

My last name was Rand. It wasn't Fernando or Salviejo, Decusan, DeGuzman, Cruz or Lucina. And I had grown up in New York, not California, where the largest concentration of Filipino-Americans lived.

I worked hard to be in the loop. I was the best at impersonating that fresh-off-the-boat, FOB accent. Barry, Clarence and

See **RAND**, *page 5*

FORM | 'Not Asian enough'

Continued from Page 1

require. Right now, schools are required to report only one ethnicity per student, out of seven major ethnicities, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

At SJSU, students are asked if they claim a secondary ethnicity, but responses to the question are not tracked for any university or government purposes, according to the Office of Institutional Research. In the semesters since Fall 2002, a total of 73 students have chosen a secondary ethnicity.

Jenssen, a graduate student in mass communications, however, said she couldn't recall a time when she had to choose between her two ethnicities.

"I am proud of both nationalities, and I would always stand up to both of them." If push came to shove, she said she would choose her country of citizenship, Germany.

But not everyone is so attached to their ethnicity.

"When people ask," said I-Ting Liu, 23, "I say I am Chinese."

She was born in Taiwan but moved to California when she was a month old.

"I feel the 'I-am-an-American' response — that is a given," she said.

Though Liu, a senior social science major, is among 2,836 other students this semester who, by appearance, are Chinese, culturally, Liu said she is an American through and through, even down to the way she dresses — which, she said, is radically different from how Asians in Asian countries dress.

"My brother thinks I hate my culture" — she said she feels no allegiance to it — "and sometimes I wonder if it's true," Liu said.

While she said she doesn't feel bad about not being Asian enough, she only feels guilty when her parents say it. On the other hand, Vanessa Diaz has never been to Cuba, the homeland of her parents, but adamantly identifies herself as Cuban.

"I always say I am Cuban. Like, I've just been raised to say I'm from Cuba," Diaz said.

Besides Diaz, 30 other students at SJSU identify as primarily Cuban, but the junior liberal studies major from Sylmar, Calif., more resembles a Californian girl than a Hispanic one. Enunciating with an almost unidentifiable accent, she speaks "the Cuban dialect of Spanish," but her ever-so-slight manner of speaking doesn't point to it.

Diaz, unlike Liu, is swift to embrace her cultural heritage.

"I like the Cuban culture," she said. "And the music — it's not all me, but I definitely find it interesting."

Despite the change in the Department of Education's collecting and reporting process, Diaz said she will tick the same box she always has: Hispanic.

A number of these students find themselves united not in their differences, but in their commonalities.

"It is just the experiences we share," said Billal Asghar, 22, a self-identified American with direct Pakistani roots.

"For example, I've met some Mexican people and we have some of the same habits. Even the jokes, or the time or amount of food we eat is the same."

Diaz said she thought that language was the unifying bond among so many identities.

Asghar, a senior global studies and health science major, moved with his family to Pakistan when he was five "to experience the culture and the land they (his parents) came from," he said.

"I feel like I was blessed to go back to Pakistan," Asghar said, "just seeing where my parents grew up and having that experience" — it is one he said he recommends.

CARLOS MORENO / SPARTAN DAILY

Billal Isghar sits at the Student Union. He was born in the U.S. but raised in Pakistan for 12 years. Isghar is a member of the Muslim, Jewish and Christian Coalition.

But after making the adjustment moving to Pakistan, Asghar had to make another when his parents chose to move back to California to be close to the other side of the family.

"I remember when I first came back (to the United States) I always wanted to go outside, because, in Pakistan, that is all we do. There is no such thing as, 'Oh, we can't go out it's dangerous.'"

LANG | Non-native students given ESL option

Continued from Page 1

picking people to play with.

"When you're younger, kids just assume your Chinese. That's like the go-to Asian race."

Kim Chavis, who works in the SJSU American Language Studies department, describes ESL as "programs that serve students and professionals who want to improve communicative confidence for their academic and personal goals."

> *"Americans are not very good with other people's accents."*
>
> **WIGGSY SIVERTSEN**
> *SJSU Counseling Services*

Miyagi chose to brush up on his English the summer before he began his freshman year at SJSU and enrolled in ESL classes at the University of California Irvine.

"Many people just come to ESL, and they study there and get a high enough English score to get into a university," Miyagi said. "But for me, I already got admission from (SJSU) before I came here because I studied a lot in Japan."

Miyagi said he sometimesstruggles to put sentences together properly in English. Even though he has been learning English since seventh grade, Miyagi still struggles with his sentence structure and accent.

"I used to get stressful when I cannot say what I want to say, but now sometimes I get stressed about my poor accent, and some people do not understand."

Wiggsy Sivertsen, in the SJSU counseling services department, said she understood Miyagi's frustration.

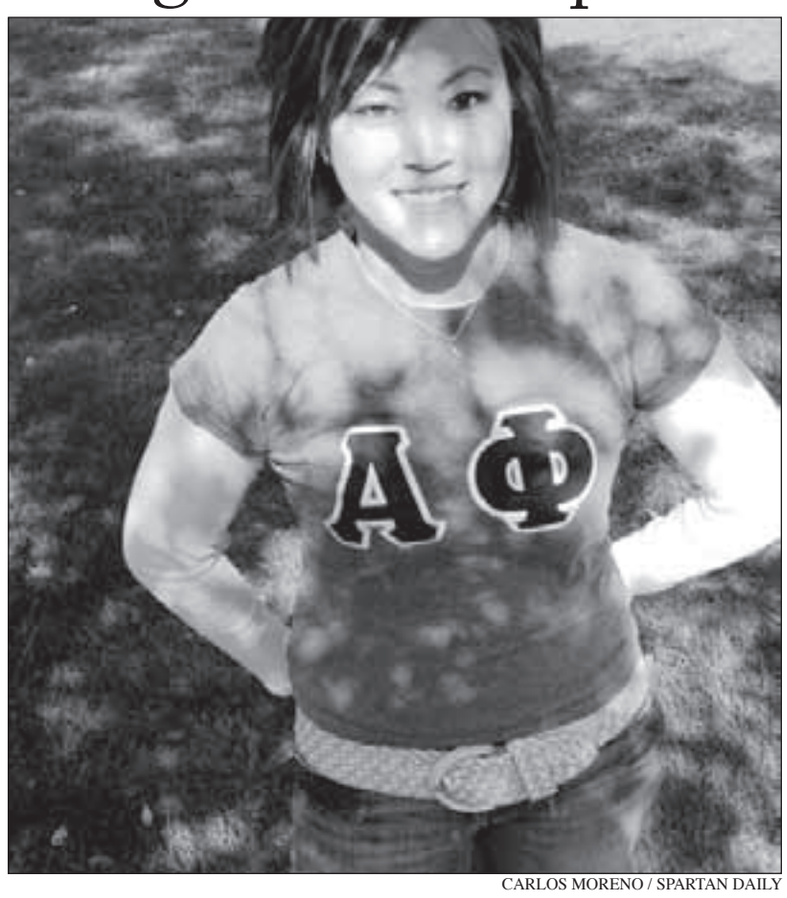
"Americans are not very good with other people's accents," she said.

Balajadia said he didn't seem to find any issues with speaking his native tongue.

"When speaking specifically about the act of speaking Tagalog," he said, "I experience no discrimination."

In contrast to what Miyagi feels about putting together sentences in English, some students feel that they struggle to speak the languages of their native countries.

Liu describes herself as Chinese but said that she feels that being in America had a role in breaking down her understanding of the Chinese language.



CARLOS MORENO / SPARTAN DAILY

I-Ting Liu, a Chinese-American, is a senior social science major and a member of Alpha Phi. Liu speaks "only a little" Chinese.

I-Ting Liu, a 23-year-old social sciences major, said that her parents' English is not that good, but they try so that there is common communication.

"Their English is comparable to my Chinese. They can get by, but can't have intelligent conversation," Liu said.

"The deterioration began when I moved out. Because at least when I was home, I would talk to my parents every now and then. Now — the language — I know it less than I used to."

Miyagi said he feels the same way, but about the English language, when he doesn't use it for a period of time.

"I go back every winter and stay (in Japan) for one month. When I come back, my English is a little rusty."

He said that because he is only speaking Japanese when he goes home, that some of his English becomes hazy.

"If you don't use it, you forget," he said.

"I'm white — German, Irish. I have a great-great grandmother who's English, but mostly German and Irish ... That's very different (from) my friend Han, who's Vietnamese ... Yeah, I eat a lot of potatoes, and she eats a lot of fish, but I think that in the same way, we have the same sort of value in what America is."

REBECCA WIRTH
junior, undeclared

"I am Mexican. Full-blooded Mexican, 100 percent made in Mexico. … I came to the U.S. when I was about 10 years old. … I would say (I identify with) both. If I had to put both of them together, I would say Chicano because it's a little bit of both ... If you really think about it, the U.S. has a lot of different cultures."

ALBA CARDENAS
junior, Spanish/photography

"I'm from India. I'm actually from a religion called Sikhism. ... It's been nine months since I've been here from India. … I'm pretty much cool with both cultures; I pretty much relate with it, because back in India, I've been in a modernized society, so they speak English, so I've been to pretty different places."

BHUPINDER NARANG
graduate, computer engineering

"African-American, Chinese and Cherokee. The main one is African-American. My mom has Asian in her. My father is African-American. My Cherokee side also comes from my mom. … I would say that I'm proud to be American and also be a person that descended from Africa. That's why I say African-American."

AUONA PINKSTON
freshman, business marketing

Professor guides cultural exploration

By DINA BASLAN
Staff Writer

Since the beginning of the semester, when Professor Persis Karim offered to guide Eleanor Lovinfosse through an education on the culture of Iran, the student has been in her office twice a week, every week.

"Both of my parents were raised here in the U.S.," said Lovinfosse, a Middle Eastern studies minor, "and they are really open and accepting of other cultures. But they never really made a point to expose me to other cultures, so I was really curious."

Karim assigns Lovinfosse a list of different readings pertaining to Iranian history, politics and literature, and the two engage in discussion, sharing their thoughts on the topics.

"I'm not going on the trip," Karim said, "but I might be able to help her read the map to where she wants to go, and I can make some suggestions about different routes."

Persis Karim, born to an Iranian father and a French mother, said she learned the importance of curiosity when it came to culture and identity from her late father. Now, she works on triggering that curiosity in the students she teaches as an American literature professor at SJSU.

Karim remembers when, as a child, her father, Alexander, used to take her on long walks along the trails of Mount Diablo in San Francisco. She said they'd talk about philosophy and, sometimes, about trees.

"I think for him, walking was ... a way to connect with the natural world," Karim said.

Karim's father arrived separately from her mother to the United States, both coming from occupied countries that suffered devastating economic problems after World War II, she said.

"He was fascinated with American democracy … inherent in the constitution," she said. "Although he was very disillusioned at the end of his life with what had become of U.S. democracy."

Unlike immigrants who came to the United States in communities, Karim's parents did not make it a primary goal to uphold traditions of their home, leaving Karim and her siblings a great exposure to the American culture.

Growing up among Americans, looking different, and having a foreign name, Karim was labeled as an "outsider." She remembers being asked as a child what she was and answering: "I don't know."

At her high school, she said she was one of only a few ethnic minorities in a neighborhood dominated by white Americans, causing her to gravitate toward students with mixed ethnic backgrounds.

"It was not that we shared anything. It was that we shared the experience of feeling a little bit outside, and sometimes your outsider-ness bonds you to other people who feel outside."

In 1979, the Iranian Revolution erupted and news coverage started depicting Iran in a new light.

Karim was in high school at the time and said she saw the revolution as "an awakening."

"For me, it just aroused questions about what's my relationship to that culture and to those people."

Her father helped her develop an affinity toward the Iranian culture, in different ways, such as reciting poetry verses in Persian on a day-to-day basis.

> *"You always are looking for your story. You want to read yourself in literature."*
>
> **PERSIS KARIM**
> *American literature professor*

She remembers him also translating verses by the Persian poet Omar Khayyam and the way his words held "some kind of magic" for her father.

"As I got older, as I learned Persian, he could share more of his world with me," she said.

Since then, literature has become what Karim calls "the vehicle by which I travel."

She said she started meeting people with interests in literature and culture and who had the same ethnic background as she did.

"You always are looking for your story," Karim said. "You want to read yourself in literature."

As a result, Kar im gathered literary work by Iranian-American writers in a book she edited titled "A World Between: Poems, Short Stories, and Essays by Iranian Americans."

She later was impressed to see that within the context of the United States, most of the Iranian-Americans writers were women. She highlighted this in another book she edited titled "Let Me Tell You Where I've Been: New Writing by Women of the Iranian Diaspora."

Karim's curiosity wasn't only Iranian-based, however it was driven by literature.

In 2007, she collaborated with creative writing Professor Kate Evans on the Pomegranate Reading Series, which was held at the Pomegranate Cafe on San Fernando Street.

It was a literary event, where once a month, three featured writers read their works aloud, ranging from poetry to fiction and non-fiction works. Afterward members of the audience could read any of their own writings, as well.

"(Karim) always has a lot of great ideas for trying to think about ways to get people involved and excited — being a literary community together," Evans said.

Karim is now the wife of a Jewish-American man, Craig. The couple has two sons.

She said the time she spent with her father had shaped her in ways she didn't know were so meaningful before, and she now tries to be that figure for her 5-year-old son, Nikko.

"Sometimes I get very sad, and I wish (my father) was here to see me," she said, "or see my son. My son is a little bit like him, he has that spark — a joy for life and a curiosity."

Karim said she wants Nikko to embrace the diversity in his ethnic background. For now, she said she takes her son for long walks like her father once did a long time ago.

ARTHUR MARKMAN / SPARTAN DAILY
Professor Persis Karim (right) hosts informal study sessions with SJSU student Eleanor Lovinfosse, a Middle Eastern studies minor, on the political and social culture of Iran.

"I'm Chinese, Vietnamese — half and half. I'm the second generation. (I identify) more with Chinese because I speak that at home more. … Speaking Chinese more, I guess it's just a part of me. The other part isn't around here. I'm just more involved with the culture."

TY LAI
senior, justice studies

"Filipino. My mom attended college here. … I was the first generation born here … I identify more with American culture."

JOVIL CLEMENTE
sophomore, creative arts

"I'm Mexican and Irish. My mom is Mexican, and my dad is Irish. I would be an American more than anything. I grew up in a suburban neighborhood in the Bay Area. It was a mixture of a lot of races and classes of people."

PAMELA CLAY
senior, geology

"I'm Polish-American, basically. Half polish, and my mother's side, they came in on the Mayflower, so I just say American. (My dad) is full Polish, but he grew up in Pittsburgh (Penn.). … We have our Polish customs, Polish food, especially around Christmas time, we have a lot of things that are from Polish culture."

MAREK KAPOLKA
freshman, computer science

Campus cultural center offers a diverse orientation

By KIMBERLY TSAO
Staff Writer

The MOSAIC Cross Cultural Center cordially invites freshmen to a New Student Welcome Reception every year. The center divides the event into different racial categories: African-American, Asian Pacific Islander or Latino/Chicano.

"I think it's weird," said Hsin Chang, a senior graphic design major who is Chinese. "They're all students. Why separate them?"

The purpose of the reception, said Sadika Hara, assistant director of MOSAIC Cross Cultural Center, is to give marginalized populations a chance to find community "pretty immediately."

"It's important to be reflected when you come into college," she said, "to know that there are people you can relate to or who may have similar cultural backgrounds that you can connect with."

Of these groups, the Hispanic community is the largest at SJSU, according to the Office of Institutional Research, with 4,908 enrolled this semester. They constitute 15.9 percent of the student body, while the African American and Asian Pacific Islander students make up less than 6 percent, at 1,496 and 266 students respectively.

MOSAIC hosts a two-hour optional reception for each race as part of the Fall Welcome Days for incoming students. Once the freshmen find their way through the zigzag staircases of the Student Union, they can mingle with members of student organizations, faculty and the community.

"(The reception) is how I met other organizations and how I got involved on campus and in the community," said Milan Balinton, a junior communication studies major who is black and Filipino. He said he's continuing his college education because he met his advisers at the reception.

In the past, people from the Disability Resource Center, the Financial Aid Office and the police department have attended.

Andre Barnes, UPD chief of police, said that as an African-American, he wanted to make sure that group, which typically doesn't do well in terms of longevity here on campus, succeeds.

"I try to make sure that I go to all the student orientations and be supportive," said Barnes, who has attended the reception for the last three years.

Balinton said that being able to identify with people who have similar values or cultural beliefs within your race or cultural background helps those people graduate and learn more about themselves throughout their college experience.

"If I'm the only brown-skinned in the class, my professor knows when I am present or not present," he said. "(When) an issue comes up that's African-American, I feel like the weight automatically shifts on me, or most people, like, look at me."

Balinton, said he not only went to the African-American reception but the Latino/Chicano one as well. He said he would have gone to the Asian Pacific Islander event if he didn't have a class at the same time.

Hara said anyone can come to any of the receptions — regardless of race.

The turnout at the Latino/Chicano reception has been "steady," Hara said, and the African-American reception retains the best attendance. Although the reception for Asian Pacific Islanders has the smallest attendance, she said it's no less significant.

"It's problematic because it's an important space," Hara said. "We hope that students will want to come."

Hara said the events remain separated so full respect and appreciation can be given to each heritage.

"I'm not sure the culture would be honored if we … make that one large reception," Hara said.

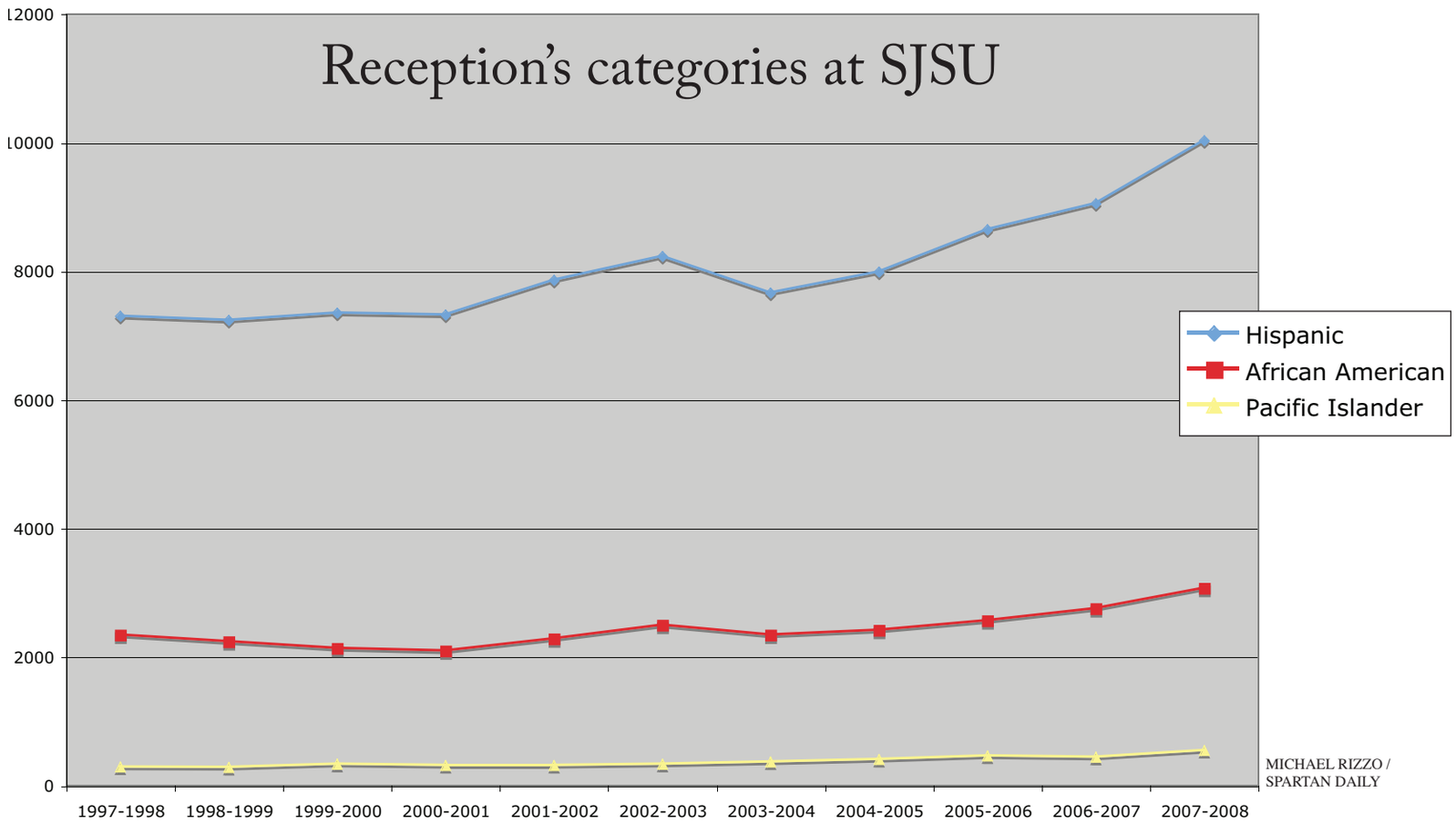
She said the center doesn't hold a Caucasian or European reception because in the past, they were the colonizers.

"Historically, there was so much oppression where folks from these populations were not allowed to celebrate culture," Hara said.

Filipino-American student William Escobar looks at it differently.

"Separation by anything, according to history, didn't work out," said Escobar, a senior mechanical engineering major.

Michael Rizzo contributed to this story.



MICHAEL RIZZO / SPARTAN DAILY

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SUDOKU

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TODAY'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS
1 Part of mpg
4 Optimum
8 Cruise in style
13 — mater
14 Post-kindergarten
15 Better trained
16 "Peanuts" kid
17 Effectively treat
18 Watered silk
19 Crack pilot
20 Chief miscreants
22 Flower-arranging art
24 After that
25 P.O. service
26 Merry sound (hyph.)
28 Playing card
31 Not working
34 Agree
35 Wine label info
36 Steel ingredient
37 Thin cookie
38 Earthen jar
39 Soften
40 Jump over
41 Put down
42 Folk-song mule
43 Is grief-stricken
44 Wimple wearer
45 Cry of dismay
47 Submarines
51 Oriental ritual (2 wds.)
55 Forefront
56 "— vincit amor"
57 Building part
58 Pinch
59 Prospector, maybe
60 "M*A*S*H" actor
61 Remnant
62 Astrology concern
63 Dry run
64 Author — Rand

DOWN
1 Courage
2 Game-show host
3 Moonbeam
4 Trailing
5 Helen, in Spain
6 Thick carpeting
7 Cash drawer
8 Harley competitor
9 Dwelling
10 Buyers
11 Man of the haus
12 Very, to Yvette
13 Jai —
20 Inflatable item, maybe
21 Knockout gas
23 Main force
26 Platter players (hyph.)
27 Help a hoodlum
29 Room divider
30 Out loud
31 Basinger and Delaney
32 Fringe —
33 Excessively optimistic one
34 Door frame
35 Half-grown
37 Suitor
41 Jetties
43 Asparagus tips
44 Like skim milk
46 Slicker
47 Parka features
48 Walrus tusk
49 Consumed
50 Glitch
51 Male turkeys
52 Discharge
53 Q.E.D. part
54 Lawn pest
58 Boise's st.

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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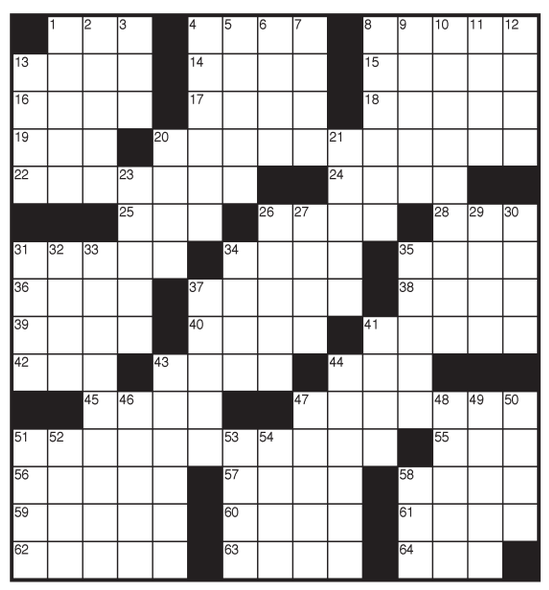

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Common ground found on unfamiliar soil

By DINA BASLAN
Staff Writer

Sitting on her lap, locking her gray hair strands around my little fingers, I remember counting with *"si nana,"* my grandmother.

One, two, three.

"Ze, 'tu, sh'e," and the anxious 6-year-old kid I was couldn't wait to learn how to count to 10 — to count in Circassian like *si nana* did. Her shiny, little eyes would smile back at me behind the yellow-shaded glasses that rested on her nose.

"Mumtaz," she would say in Arabic, the official language of Jordan. "Excellent."

My mother also used to recount other Circassian phrases in the day, some of which I still use frequently. But mostly, I was surrounded by the Arabic language at home and English at school.

Despite the fact that every childhood memory I possess resides back in Amman, the capital of Jordan, my childhood wasn't of any typical upbringing of a Jordanian family; the rituals weren't quite the same.

I was so overtaken by my connection to the Caucasus that, at one point, I felt lost sitting with a Jordanian group of kids.

I came back home to my mother and asked her: "Mom, what's the difference between Jordanians, Palestinians and Arabs? Two of my friends had an argument about it at school today."

Si nana was my window to the Northwest Caucasus when I was a kid; in her, I saw a world that fascinated me. She led a simple, giving life based on respect and honesty.

She was born in Jordan to a father who migrated from the Northwest Caucasus, a mountainous region situated between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, which made her one of the first generation of Circassian-Jordanians.

The first Circassians arrived to Jordan in 1878. After the end of the Russian-Circassian war, which lasted more than 100 years, a mass deportation by Russia carried more than 1 million Circassians out of their homeland — a number of whom died of the raging epidemic of typhus and smallpox, according to A.P. Berge, a Russian researcher of the Caucasian War.

However, being born in Amman with an Arabic mother-tongue never made me feel less of a Circassian. I was, and am still today, surrounding myself with a "Circassian world" that acts as my comfort zone and feeds my passion — a world I call Neverland for its unlikely existence except for in my mind.

As I was trying to create a more Circassian association in my life, I enrolled in a Circassian folkloric dancing troupe when I was 14. I danced with the troupe until the day I left Jordan to attend college in California.

Being a part of that community allowed me to meet more Circassian friends, meet Circassians from the Caucasus who either trained us, or play the Circassian music for us or just visited.

At 16, I joined a group of young Circassian girls and boys on a trip to the Caucasus for three weeks. It was a boot camp, and after the three weeks had passed, we felt we weren't ready to go back to Amman.

"I do miss my mom terribly," I thought. "But perhaps she could come and visit me here?"

I was, and am still today, surrounding myself with a "Circassian world" that acts as my comfort zone and feeds my passion

Later I moved here to San Jose and started looking for Circassians living in the area.

I met a Jordanian-Circassian guy living in Monterey whom a friend of mine referred me to.

I was there almost every weekend, and California did not seem too bad after all.

After I felt more comfortable with the "Circassian world" I had created around myself, I started mingling with students of different ethnicities on campus only to realize there were many people going through the same experience I've gone through. I felt, now, I could find a common ground between myself and others. I could learn about other communities who have gone through the same history my people went through.

In the past month, I have met five Circassian guys. One came from Rihannia, an Israeli village with an estimated population of 3,000 Circassians, and the other four came straight from Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria Republic.

The six of us asked each other curiously what our life experiences were like, and we searched for those commonalities between us. For every one of my new Circassian friends, it felt like I have known them my whole life.

They are teaching me more of the Circassian language, but now I am only a little step ahead of counting. Now, I can put a couple of sentences together.

RAND | 'I was learning to fit in wherever I went'

Continued from Page 1

Richard loved it when I did it, when I impersonated our Filipino grandfathers, who all sounded exactly the same when they were angry: "Putang ina mo. You are olways restless, hah. You are making trobbles, olways making kalat. Jast seet. Always hob to be doing someting."

I forced myself to fit in. I was in, sure, but I had a complex. It wasn't my dad's fault he was white. But that made me different. It made my house different. It made me a Mestizo, "mixed."

Mestizos, actually, were gems in the Philippines. They had that lighter skin that was made for TV; that lighter, richer skin that made you less indigenous.

"You should go to da Pilippines, Kebin, to be an actor," I would hear from one of my mom's relatives. "Dey like Mestizos. You will not hob to work. Dey will do your londry and cook por you."

I saw cultures clash, almost every day, in my own house. I know nothing different.

I learned to like it a little. I liked walking into the Filipino parties. My mom would introduce me to the aunties, and my head would immediately get big. "Oh, he's so guapo (handsome). Talagang Mestizo. Talagang guapo."

So screw you, Clarence. You're not Mestizo, Barry. You're not guapo. But what I didn't realize was, throughout this process, I was learning to fit in wherever I went. I was becoming a social chameleon.

I would visit New York with my family, and all of my dad's side was white, of course, so there was no need to be Filipino anymore.

Then high school rolled around, and I'd developed a tight group of friends outside of my own ethnicity, even though I still carried my childhood with me, just in case I had to be Filipino again.

Plus, I was getting older, more mature, I guess; so it didn't matter as much. I found new Filipino friends my junior year, and it was different this time. I think because we were older it didn't matter that I was half white.

No more, "white boy." And if any Filipino would've called me that, I would've stood up for myself, proudly.

But, really, it didn't and doesn't matter anymore. It doesn't matter anymore because it just doesn't matter.

I still love rice. I love Nike Airs. I love my deceased Lola and Lolo. I loved their accents and their ways, how they treated me. I was their "apo," their dear child.

I walk around campus today, and it doesn't matter what I am. Most people probably don't even know what I am when they see me, and I really don't care.

I see Filipinos on campus, and it's different for me now. I still identify, but not as much as I used to. I "get it," sort of.

I get what it means to feel like I have an ethnicity — Filipino, Mexican, Indian or whatever. I also know what it feels like to ignore my ethnicity, to just be whoever I am: that person who grew up with two totally different sides of the family.

I'm that kid who grew up on rice, the one whose dad hated the smell of fish when Mom was cooking. I saw cultures clash, almost every day, in my own house. I know nothing different.

None of us know anything different, but I know we're learning something: how to be ourselves.

We're learning how to be Filipino and white and exactly who we want to be on top of all of that. I love my culture, but I love myself more.

I'll always be Filipino. *This campus* will always be Filipino, Indian, Chinese, Samoan, Laotian, Mexican, mixed, confused, gay, straight, preppy, emo, black, white or even "unknown."

It's all of those things, but we're learning to love ourselves even more than with whom we identify.

We won't stop celebrating. Akbayan will, and should, always be here. Today is Cinco de Mayo, and that should always mean something. Our cultures, whether foreign-based or American-borne, mean something. But we're learning.

We're learning about each other and ourselves. We're learning how much our cultures matter and also how much we, as individuals and as a school or a classroom or a society, matter.

I am Filipino. I am white.

I am all of that — and more.

We are all of that and more.

Do Americans want what they've got?

By TRUTH ESGUERRA
Special to the Daily

Sometime last year, I was driving on my way to school in the morning.

I was simply driving down Montague Expressway, which was full of traffic at the time, when I had a stressful encounter with another driver.

As I was driving, I noticed a car tailgating about a yard behind my bumper. It seemed that the driver was in a bit of a rush, but there was nothing I could do because of all the cars ahead of me. As I continued my drive, the tailgating car suddenly changed lanes and paralleled his vehicle to mine.

The driver then lowered his window and yelled, "Get off the road you stupid chink." Then, in a sudden instant, he overtook my car and continued to zigzag his way through the lanes.

"Did he just call me a chink?" I thought to myself.

I am not Chinese. I am a Filipino-American.

Also, I am a pretty safe driver. I usually drive the speed limit and give a space cushion to other drivers. I have never gotten a ticket.

So why did the driver yell an angry, racial slur at me? Did he believe the stereotype that Asians cannot drive?

Now this incident left me with a question: Do Americans really want their country to be an ethnically diverse nation?

Though Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and the Civil Rights Movement changed America forever, has it really extinguished America's feelings of racial disgust, or is it just buried beneath the soil ready to rise?

I hear them all around me: Asian insults, white insults, black insults, Mexican insults and Jewish insults. There are stereotypes of all blacks being very good in sports while all Asians must be nerds. If people in this nation want peace and equality, why do they create judgments that bring other people down?

Is that what America is — a smorgasbord of different people who don't understand each other?

I have resided in the quiet town of Milpitas basically all of my life. As far as I know, Milpitas, an ethnically diverse city, has been pretty good at handling the different demographics.

Our businesses are diverse, our schools are diverse and our city government is diverse. Why can't America become more like my humble, little town?

There are some who are trying to loosen these tight racial issues. Movies such as "Crash" and comedians like Chris Rock are making it more comfortable to talk about racial issues.

But are they working?

What does it take to unify the races here in America?

Does it take the destruction of the social ladder? Does it take a universal language? Does it take an African-American or Asian-American president in the White House?

Do Americans want unity and equality at all?

Q: Which one are you? A: None of the above

By SAMUEL LAM
Senior Staff Writer

I guess when it comes right down to it, I'm not that Asian after all.

I don't have an accent. I am terrible with numbers. I know nothing about science. I can't build a computer. And I don't eat rice all the time.

Sorry, I can't live up to the stereotypical prerequisites for Asians. It doesn't work for me.

I speak English better than I speak Chinese. Getting a "B-" on an exam is very acceptable. I'm an embarrassment to the sport of badminton. And I don't squat when I take pictures — let alone throw up the peace sign when someone takes my picture.

Yet I'm still labeled Asian.

It wasn't easy being an American-born Chinese (ABC) boy in a very traditional family. My parents wanted me to stay true to my Chinese roots,

What about being different really matters?

while I was trying to find my identity in a diverse California. While all my friends woke up to watch Saturday morning cartoons, my Saturday mornings were spent studying Chinese at a school in San Francisco.

As my non-Asian classmates in elementary school asked me questions like "How do you write my name in Chinese?" and "Can you teach me how to say a bad word in Chinese?" I just told them everything I could about my culture. But when I noticed how different I was, I longed to be the same as everyone else.

"Why do we have to eat Chinese food for dinner every day?" I asked my mom on a weekly basis. "Just because I am Chinese, doesn't mean I have to eat Chinese food all the time."

Mom said that since Grandma was already home while I got picked up from after-school daycare, it would be easy for her to cook, and we could eat dinner right when we got home. Grandma was from Hong Kong, and Chinese food was the only set of recipes she had in her mental cookbook.

I was labeled Asian, but I didn't feel like I had to be just that. Did I have to be Asian all the time?

Growing up in the East Bay and having gone to school in the Berkeley area most of my life, I got a chance to experience a great collection of different people.

Going up and down Berkeley's University Avenue, I could eat food from all different parts of the world. A trip down Telegraph Avenue exposed me to music from all latitudes of this planet. And it didn't matter what you enjoyed, because it was OK to be different.

In the Bay Area, it didn't matter if skin color, language, religion or sexual orientation weren't uniform.

Caifornia has offered us a great exposure to different cultures and lifestyles. There is no shame — and there shouldn't be any shame.

Tiger Woods calls himself "Cablinasian" while he continues to dominate golf. Eminem at one point was the top artist in rap. Our next president might not be an old white man.

When we look into the diversity of our great world, we just have to wonder: What about being different matters? Not much really.

It took me a while to learn, but I was fortunate to have been raised Chinese at home. I love being a part of that culture. And I still love Chinese food.

But I was even luckier to have grown up in an environment that was so diverse that I could be whatever I want and make friends with whomever I want. I could listen to Led Zeppelin or 2Pac, eat a falafel and still kick your ass in ping pong.

So I guess you can label me "Asian-American-who-loves-everything-and-doesn't-care-what-you-think."

Or you can just label me Sam.

SPARTAN DAILY

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*Weather forecast courtesy of SJSU department of meteorology

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"I have a European heritage, but my family is from the Monterey Bay. I'm mainly from Western Europe, like German, Irish and French."

KAREN COULLAHAN
senior, art

"I'm originally from French Guiana, which is north of Brazil. So it would count as South American, technically. I was born in France, and my parents moved to France, but they moved back to French Guiana. So I'm European, but at the same time I'm American, even though it's not American. It's more like South American."

TARIQ ABDUL-WAHAD
graduate student, art history

"My dad's full Mexican, so I'm half Mexican, and my mom is a mix. On my mother's side, I'm part Russian, French, English and a tiny bit Irish. But I would say for the majority: Mexican, Russian and English."

BRITTANY CORNEJO
junior, public relations

"Both my parents are from the Philippines. My mom came here when she was 5, and my dad came here when he was 18. My mom is a little bit more Americanized, but my dad is still really strict and everything, with the same traditional values from the Philippines."

DESIREE CALIGUIRAN
senior, psychology

Next to adjust at SJSU

Presidential candidates come from less diverse universities

By JOHN HORNBERG
Staff Writer

Each finalist for SJSU's presidency is different — but the campuses they come from might not be that different from each other.

Demographic information from each of the finalists' universities indicates three similar campuses — all predominantly white students, with ethnic groups that are highly represented at SJSU making up a small percentage.

A diverse candidate pool wasn't the main consideration of the selection committee, said Gerry Selter, an assistant to the president, but they were aware of it.

"The idea is to get the best-qualified candidate for the position," Selter said, adding that there is one Latino and a woman in the final candidate pool. "There is always an effort to identify qualified people from different backgrounds."

None of the universities where the finalists work now has a Hispanic population totaling slightly more than 13 percent of its population, or an Asian population at more than 3.5 percent. In contrast, Hispanics make up about 24 percent of the student population at SJSU, while Asian Americans add another 22 percent.

Finding someone from another university as diverse as SJSU presented a challenge, said Associated Students' President Ben Henderson.

"We definitely considered the school's diversity," he said. "It's hard to have a candidate from a campus as diverse as ours."

Texas Tech University, where finalist Jon Whitmore has served as president for the past five years, has a campus a population of more than 28,000. Of that population, about 75 percent are white students, and no other ethnic group besides Hispanics make up more than 8 percent of the student populace.

Demographic information from Northern Arizona University, where Elizabeth Grobsmith served as provost and vice president of academic affairs, is similar to Texas Tech. About 70 percent of the 21,300 students identify as white.

Sonoma State University is, according to information from its office of institutional research, composed mostly of white students. The university where Eduardo Ochoa has served as provost and vice president of academic affairs is composed of about 66 percent white students.

Of its nearly 32,000 students, SJSU's student population is about 43 percent white according to demographic information for the Fall semester.

One of the qualifications listed by the CSU for the new SJSU president is "Demonstrated success in promoting diversity, and sensitivity to cultural diversity and multi-cultural education."

Henderson said the race and gender of each candidate was considered during the presidential search. The goal, he said, was to find people who would best represent the campus and its diversity.

> "The idea is to get the best-qualified candidate for the position ..."
>
> **GERRY SELTER**
> *assistant to the president*

"We wanted to have diverse candidates," he said. "We definitely wanted to have candidates who were sensitive to race and gender issues on campus."

Each member of the presidential selection committee represented a different constituency, Henderson said, and asked questions of the applicants based on whom they represented.

"It's not just about the diversity of the campus," he said. "But it's about being sensitive to the diversity of the campus."

DEMO | Student cites SJSU's affordability

Continued from page 1

campus population, and whites make up 15 percent of engineering majors, according to the analysis.

Yu, 23, who moved to San Jose from China, said, "I'm not sure, but I think Americans are not so good at math or physics. In India and China, I think they need a lot of people in (engineering). So many students want to learn that so they can get a better job when they graduate and go back to their country."

Kaushik Brajapati, a graduate computer engineering major, said that he didn't know the exact reason why so many of the engineering students were Indian, but said he had an idea of why it is so.

"It's fairly cheaper than other universities, and you get better courses as well — and pretty good faculty."

Stephen Bringuel, a freshman electrical engineering major, said his engineering courses have mostly Indian and white students, but that the demographics don't matter to the particular subject.

"It's not like we're talking about political issues," Bringuel, 19, said about his engineering courses. "It's just science."

However, Tamer Abuelata, a senior philosophy major, said the diversity at SJSU benefits debate in politically involved courses.

"If you're taking a political science class, and you learn about making political decisions, it's good to know how it's going to affect different classes of society," said Abuelata, 25. "It helps you consider the consequences of your decisions. Sometimes, we seem to have simplistic ideas, and they seem to work for us, but they don't necessarily work for other people. So, when there's diversity, you notice a lot of the ideas that don't work for everybody."

Lauren Edwards, a senior political science major, said the Israeli-Palenstinian conflict has been an issue of discussion in her War and Peace class.

"We spend a lot of time talking about Israel and Palestine, and we have people from Israel and Palestine in the class," Edwards said. "It's really nice because they grew up there, and they have firsthand knowledge about what it's like."

A SPLASH OF VICTORY

Jerry Baptiste, a third-year mechanical engineering major, celebrates with his co-workers after a victory in a carnival-style version of basketball during an end of the year picnic with employees who work on campus. Baptiste's team consisted of all those who work alongside him at the Dining Commons.

ANNE RIGOR / SPARTAN DAILY